

Communications Team

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www.kingcounty.gov/health

Frequently Asked Questions for Employers about H1N1 virus (swine flu)

How can employers protect themselves, their families, and their employees?

- **Sick employees should stay home from work** or consider ways they can work from home. Prevent the spread of illness within the workplace by asking employees to stay home when sick. During the H1N1 flu outbreak, national and local leaders and Public Health encourage employers to be generous with sick leave to protect the health of the community.
- **Promote actions to stop the spread of germs:**
 - Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or the crook of your elbow.
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are also effective.
- **Develop a business continuity plan as a precaution.** Public Health provides planning guidance and a video for businesses and organizations at www.kingcounty.gov/health/pandemicflu
- **Encourage personal preparedness.** Employees who have planned for child care in the event of school closures and who know what to do when loved ones get sick will likely lose less days of work during an outbreak. Information on planning at: www.kingcounty.gov/health/pandemicflu
- **Keep updated about H1N1 virus.** Employees often look to employers as an important source of information. Public Health continually updates information and educational materials for distribution to employees: www.kingcounty.gov/health/swineflu

When should I send a sick employee home?

In general, encourage employees with flu-like symptoms to go home. These symptoms include fever of 100° F. or more with sore throat, coughing, runny nose, vomiting or diarrhea.

If employees have been sick with H1N1 flu, how long should they stay home?

As with seasonal flu, employees should remain home from work for five days after getting sick or for a full day after the illness is over, whichever is longer. (Example: if sick for three days, remain home five days; if sick for eight days, remain home nine days.)

Should employees be tested for H1N1 flu (swine flu) if they have been in Mexico or another affected area?

No. Health care providers do not routinely test for H1N1 virus, nor does Public Health recommend medical evaluation for H1N1 flu unless the person meets specific clinical criteria. Health care providers can better serve people who are most ill if they don't have to spend time evaluating people who aren't sick.

For more information and frequent updates:

Public Health – Seattle & King County, www.kingcounty.gov/health/h1n1

Flu Hotline, 877-903-5464, TTY Relay: 711, 9 am - 5 pm, (M - F), interpreters available